

Baptist Distinctives – The Priesthood of All Believers

1 Peter 2:5, 9

April 25, 2026

The apostles taught that when Jesus died for our sins, He fulfilled the sacrificial system. As our perfect High Priest, He sacrificed Himself, the Perfect Lamb of God, for the sins of the world. When He had finished paying for our sins, the veil in the holy of holies, ripped in two from top to bottom, symbolizing the removal of the separation between God and man for all who placed their faith in God's Son. Today we will learn that the Bible teaches that **all** believers in Jesus Christ are priests before God. We do not need anyone other than Christ to mediate our relationship with God.

There have always been churches that believed this doctrine throughout church history. One of these groups was the Anabaptists in the early 1500's. "Anabaptist" means "baptize again." Anabaptists got this name because they rejected infant baptism. They believed that baptism was to follow belief in Christ, so those baptized as an infant needed to be baptized again after they placed their faith in Christ.

The Anabaptists first appeared in Switzerland. They arose due to a conflict with the Reformer, Ulrich Zwingli, who refused to renounce infant baptism. The Anabaptists, led by Conrad Grebel and Felix Mantz, believed that only believers should be baptized. The city fathers of Zurich condemned the Anabaptists and imprisoned all who refused to baptize their infant children. The movement was suppressed in Zurich, but it began to spread throughout Switzerland and throughout Europe.

The Anabaptists led by Balthasar Hubmaier and John Dnek lived in Germany at the time of the Reformation. Hubmaier was imprisoned and tortured for his beliefs and burned at the stake on March 10, 1528. Though the Anabaptists arose at the time of the Reformation, they were not a part of the Reformation. The Anabaptists were part of the free, independent church movement and were not among the groups that tried to reform the Roman Catholic church. The Anabaptists actually preceded the reformers. Tragically, the Anabaptists were persecuted by both the Roman Catholics and the Reformers for their refusal of infant baptism.

Anabaptists did not believe that salvation came through a church, priest, or sacrament. They believed instead that Christ is our only Mediator between God and man, and that believers are priests before God. Today, we will explore the Baptist doctrine of the priesthood of the believer.

1. All believers are priests before God. They have direct access to God Himself and can intercede for on behalf of other believers. Believers ought to live holy lives worthy of their calling (1 Peter 2:5; cf. 1:14-17).
 - a. As holy priests, believers are to **"offer up spiritual sacrifices."**
 - i. These sacrifices are **spiritual**; only Christ's sacrifice was for sin (Hebrews 8:1-10:18).
 - ii. Believers offer **themselves** as **living sacrifices** in service to God (Romans 12:1-2).
 1. Romans 12:1-2 "I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service. And be not conformed to this world: but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God."
 - iii. Believers offer **praises** (Hebrews 13:15).
 1. Hebrews 13:15 "By him therefore let us offer the sacrifice of praise to God continually, that is, the fruit of our lips giving thanks to his name."
 - iv. Believers voluntarily **sacrifice themselves to serve others** (Philippians 2:17).
 1. Philippians 2:17 "Yea, and if I be offered upon the sacrifice and service of your faith, I joy, and rejoice with you all."
 - v. Believers offer up good deeds in worship to God (Hebrews 13:16).
 1. Hebrews 13:16 "But to do good and to communicate forget not: for with such sacrifices God is well pleased."
 - vi. Believers offer material possessions to be used for God's service (Philippians 4:18; Hebrews 13:16).
 1. Philippians 4:18 "But I have all, and abound: I am full, having received of Epaphroditus the things which were sent from you, an odour of a sweet smell, a sacrifice acceptable, wellpleasing to God."
 - b. As holy priests, believers offer up spiritual sacrifices that are **acceptable to God by Jesus Christ**.
 - i. **Jesus is our Mediator, and it is through Him that our sacrifices are made acceptable to God.**
 - ii. We can only approach God through Christ (cf. 3:18).
 1. John 14:6 "Jesus saith unto him, I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by me."
 2. Acts 4:12 "Neither is there salvation in any other: for there is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved."

3. 1 Timothy 2:5 "For there is one God, and **one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus;**"
 4. Hebrews 4:14-16 "Seeing then that we have **a great high priest**, that is passed into the heavens, **Jesus the Son of God**, let us hold fast our profession. For we have not an **high priest** which cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities; but was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin. **Let us therefore come boldly unto the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need.**"
2. All believers are chosen by God to function as a royal priesthood (9a).
 - a. All believers form a **chosen people**.
 - i. Those who have placed their faith in Christ have been born into a new family of believers. This new family transcends all ancestries, languages, and cultures.
 - ii. God has chosen that those who place their faith in Jesus become joint-heirs with Christ (Romans 8:15-17).
 - iii. Just as God chose Israel to be a blessing to all nations of the world, **God has chosen believers to bless the world by living and proclaiming the gospel** (Matthew 28:19-20).
 - b. All believers form a **royal priesthood**.
 - i. Believers are **royal** in that they are **the children of God** and **joint-heirs** with Christ.
 - ii. Believers are described as a **priesthood**, who are **God's representatives in the world**.
 1. 2 Corinthians 5:20 "Now then **we are ambassadors for Christ**, as though God did beseech you by us: we pray you in Christ's stead, be ye reconciled to God."
 - iii. As priests before God, believers are also to **learn how to develop their own discernment** in understanding the will of God for their lives.
 - c. All believers form a **holy nation**.
 - i. As a **nation** of believers, we are bound together by the same laws, customs, and values.
 - ii. As a **holy** nation, believers are to live in a new, God-honoring way (cf. 1:14-16).
 - d. All believers form a **peculiar people**.
 - i. Believers are solely God's people, belonging exclusively to Him (cf. 1:18-19).
 - ii. 1 Corinthians 6:20 "For ye are **bought with a price**: therefore **glorify God in your body, and in your spirit, which are God's.**"

Implications of the Priesthood of the Believer:

1. Everyone has the responsibility to believe in Christ for themselves; no one can make that decision for anyone but themselves.
2. Being a priest is a gift, not an achievement; it is a gift given to all who place their faith in Christ's finished work on the cross.
3. Believers are all subservient to our High Priest, Christ Jesus; all believers are equal to one another; there is no hierarchy of priests in the local church (Hebrews 7:23-8:13).
4. As a priest, every believer is to learn how to discern God's will for his or her life through the study of the Scriptures and the leading of the Holy Spirit.
5. As a priest, every believer has a responsibility to intercede for other believers and the world.
6. As a priest, every believer is to share the gospel with the world around us.
7. As a member of the priesthood of believers, believers are to serve one another in the context of the local church.
8. As a member of the priesthood of believers, believers aid one another in their understanding of God's will.
9. As a member of the priesthood of believers, believers worship God individually and corporately.